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PERON UNMASKED



THE MARTYRDOM OF THE
FREE TRADE UNION MOVEMENT
IN ARGENTINA

AP

CENTRAL



FOREWORD

THE Inter American Regional Organization of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, since its Founding Congress in Mexico in January 1951 has fought without truce against the regime of Dictator Juan D. Peron, which has strangled in blood the rights of the workers, while hiding behind a smoke screen of "pro-labor" propaganda.

In publishing this pamphlet, which un-masks before the conscience of America and the world the pharisee "social justice" of this regime of hypocrisy and lies, we proclaim once again our solidarity with those who, with tenacity and valor, continue the struggle in favor of free and democratic trade unionism in unhappy Argentina.

We are indebted to Dr. Robert J. Alexander of Rutgers' University for translating and editing this pamphlet from its original Spanish text.

Chapter I

The Peronista Conference in Asuncion

FROM February 13 to 17, 1952 there took place in Asuncion, the capital of Paraguay, a so-called "labor" conference, whose shady origins and dishonest political purposes force us to denounce it before the workers of the continent.

The agents of Peron in Argentina first announced that delegates of the C.G.T. of Buenos Aires (that is to say, the labor office of the Peron government), and some elements from Uruguay and Paraguay, would constitute a trade union group of the "Rio de la Plata Basin." These labor lackeys of Peron began their meeting as representatives of the Rio de la Plata Basin; but they ended it with the constitution of a so-called Latin American Trade Union Unity Committee, which their press releases claimed had been established by 140 delegates from 16 countries.

The constitution of this pseudo trade union Committee presents the free workers of the continent with a grave and urgent problem, since this phoney labor group organized by the totalitarians of the South will be an element of division among the workers of Latin America. It will be a docile tool in the hands of militarist and dictatorial governments, and will be hostile to all of the democracies of the continent, thus throwing confusion into the ranks of the legitimate labor movements of America. This new central labor group created by Peron will thus be another totalitarian weapon, and will be the international rallying ground for the hemisphere's dictatorships and militarists.

The servants of Southern totalitarianism in Asuncion drew up a declaration of principles, designated Buenos Aires as headquarters of the so-called Latin American Trade Union Unity Committee, demanded the liberty of five labor prisoners in Bolivia, advocated the independence of Puerto Rico, and denounced a United States firm which operates in Guatemala. This meeting was characterized by what it said and even more by what it left unsaid. It had not a word of condemnation for Soviet imperialism, or for the menace which faces the democratic civilization of the West. It asked the freedom of five Bolivian prisoners, but had nothing to say concerning the freeing of the 30,000 political prisoners and exiles who are victims of the Argentine, Venezuelan, Peruvian, Paraguayan and Dominican dictatorships. The intention and purpose of these Peronista stooges

in Paraguay is clear for all of the workers of the continent to see.

Yesterday it was Hitler and Mussolini who were trying to throw the hemisphere into confusion by the creation of their famous Nazi-Fascist fifth columns, the purpose of which was to hamper Latin American production so as to create difficulties for the democratic peoples in their fight against totalitarian tyranny. Today Peron is repeating with audacity the attempt of Hitler. Peron's fifth column is much more dangerous than that which operated during the last war, since he is trying to use the long-suffering working class to lend active or passive support to the dictatorships and to discredit democratic governments and institutions in the free nations.

Peron failed last year in an attempt to establish in Montevideo an organization of venal Latin American journalists. He failed equally in his attempt to organize a fifth column among radio broadcasters. But now he has the audacity to establish this pseudo labor Committee, much as have the Communists, who, incidentally, have been allied with the dictators throughout the continent during the last few years. One need only recall the attitude of the Stalinists in Venezuela, Peru, Cuba, Brazil and in Argentina itself since 1946, to realize the truth of this last statement.

The Asuncion meeting was not called as a result of a free and spontaneous agreement by independent labor organizations. It did not represent an idealistic social movement of genuine workers organizations. The meeting in Asuncion was a gathering of functionaries and hired employees of Peron. For Peron the constitution of the so-called Latin American Trade Union Unity Committee was merely one more step in the psychological cold war he is carrying on against the United States and the United Nations for the benefit of the Soviet Union. The Asuncion meeting was the result of planning by the Peronista general staff.

The Peronista chiefs were educated by Hitler, but are resolved not to make the same errors he did. Hence, whereas the German tyrant had nothing but contempt for the Indians and Mestizos as an "inferior race," Peron has resolved to use the Indian and Mestizo workers of America. Peron's attitude is no doubt tactically superior to that of Hitler when it comes to the race problem, a superiority in strategy which he has learned from his Soviet friends.

In the light of the facts which we have thus presented concerning the Asuncion congress, it is clear

that it was not a meeting of labor folk to defend their own interests and ideas, but rather a political gathering organized for the purpose of supporting the international policies of Peronista totalitarianism.

Chapter II

The Martyrdom of the Argentine Labor Movement

IT IS obvious that under the Peronista dictatorship, the workers of Argentina have not been permitted the most elemental rights, such as those of association, organization and strike, which in all countries have been essential to the progressive development of the labor movement. Peron has denied the workers these fundamental rights because he understands that the effective use of them would undermine his own omnipotence, at the same time revealing the truth about the support which he claims to receive from the working class.

The history of the Argentine labor movement during the last few years is nothing more than a story of the struggle for the rights of association, organization and strike, which have been systematically denied the labor movement by the Peron dictatorship in its attempt to suppress the unceasing protest of the workers. The only unions which have enjoyed these rights have been those who have used them solely to sing the praises of the dictator, to applaud his histrionic speeches, or to idolize him in public demonstrations. Meetings to applaud the dictatorship were of course not only permitted but actively aided by the government. However, meetings which were a genuine expression of the wishes of the working class have received only condemnation, prohibition and abusive repression from the government.

For pro-Peronista meetings, money and police protection were lavishly offered; for other gatherings there were only jail, persecution, disruption and torture. This difference in handling workers' meetings demonstrates the essential point in the tragedy of the labor movement of the Argentine Republic. The meetings of adulation have given Peron his reputation as "pro-labor"; his treatment of others constitutes the indictment of his regime before the tribunal of world labor opinion.

A worthy history of the free Argentine trade union movement has yet to be written. This brief chapter only seeks to point up the salient facts of the present situation, which will undoubtedly be dealt

with at much greater length by some future historian of the movement.

Argentine Organized Labor Before Peron

First of all, it should be made clear that the labor movement and social legislation in Argentina did not begin with Peron. The first struggles of organized labor in Argentina occurred before 1890. Of particular importance were early railroad strikes, brought on by the continuing depreciation of the value of the Argentine peso at that time, giving rise to the workers' demand to be paid in gold.

In 1890 the workers of Argentina participated in the first celebration of May Day, which the year before had been proclaimed the International Labor Holiday at a Congress in Paris. From that time on, the Argentine working class possessed powerful trade union organizations which struggled hard for the improvement of the lot of the workers of that country. The strikes of the Argentine workers in the first years of this century are a notable chapter in the history of the world trade union movement. They were met with brutal repression by the police and by the passage in 1902 of the notorious Residence Law and the Law of Social Defense, both of which the Peron Government is still using against the organized workers.

With the entrance into parliament in 1904 of the noted Socialist leader Alfredo L. Palacios, the first elements of modern social legislation were put upon the Argentine statute books. From that time until 1942 a long series of measures were won by the hard fighting of the organized labor movement. It can be said, in fact, that 95% of the labor legislation now on the books had been approved before 1943 and that the legislation achieved under Peron is really insignificant.

The most important work of Peron has been the violent seizure of the trade unions, the transformation of the C.G.T. into an arm of the State, and the destruction of the fundamental liberties of the workers.

The Trade Union Organization Law— A Trap for the Workers

By 1944 Peron had already realized that his future lay in "pro-labor" demagogy. The military revolution of June 4, 1943 was a failure. It had no support among the people. Peron realized that something was necessary to save the fate of those who had led the revolt. So he launched a personal ad-

venture which he felt might bring *him* to success, whatever was the fate of the revolution in general.

At the end of 1944 in a nationwide radio broadcast Peron proclaimed himself a "sindicalist." He posed as a direct descendant, so to speak, of the most noble traditions of Georges Sorel, the greatest theoretician of French syndicalism. Redeemer of a forgotten idea, he aspired to be the Messiah of the labor movement.

Some months before he had been initiated into the problems and terminology of the labor movement, in a series of meetings in his office in the Ministry of War. In these meetings the new "sindicalist" learned the names of Argentina's trade unions, of the leaders of these unions, and was told what were the principal problems facing the various labor organizations. He now felt ready to become at the same time the judge and herald of the working class.

In fact, Peron set out to mold the labor movement in his own image. He created the Secretariat of Labor, which was soon converted into virtually an electoral committee on his behalf. In a well-studied propaganda campaign he began uttering platitudes about the conditions of the workers of Argentina: that in Argentina there were exploiters and exploited; that the workers of the North lived under peculiarly miserable conditions; that the workers earned only enough to die of hunger; that it is necessary to decrease the number of rich and the number of poor; that the riches produced by the people should return to them.

Eureka! Social problems, said Peron, were born in Argentina like the Revealed Truth, without rational explanation and without historic antecedents! The social question was born with Colonel Peron's taking an interest in it! And most remarkable of all, this miracle came to pass when the colonel was already 50 years old, an unusually late age for the perception of miracles of any sort.

And had there been no social problems before the advent of Peron? Had there been no misery, exploitation, poverty? Certainly there had. Peron himself knew this. The colonel of 1944, when only a lieutenant in 1919, had given the order to his troops to fire on a group of workers in front of the Vasena metal factory in one of the country's most famous labor massacres. This was, before the June 1943 Revolution, Peron's only title to knowledge of labor problems. It is easy to understand that he didn't want to refer again to this incident, particularly after

he began his campaign to hoodwink the workers into supporting him.

When in 1945 Peron signed Decree #23852—the Trade Union Organization Law—he must certainly have said to himself "That does it!" If a law like this had worked for Mussolini—and this one was not much more than a translation of the "Labor Charter" of Italian fascism—why shouldn't it work for him? The decree established certain conditions which unions would have to fulfill to receive "trade union recognition." It was a magnificent instrument for discriminating between his friends and his opponents, denying recognition to the latter, and giving it with generous complicity to the former.

This Trade Union Organization Law was the foundation stone of Peronista trade unionism. The recruiting of "yellow" unions dates from the promulgation of this decree, since all unions then existing and all which would come into existence thereafter were subject to its process of selection. If one remembers that in order to deal in any way with the Secretariat of Labor or other government agencies, or to legally engage in collective bargaining, "trade union recognition" was essential, one can understand that it did not take long before a process of persecution against the free trade unions got under way.

The fatal blow against the right of organization had thus been struck. A union must conform to Peronista demands or be subject to accumulating persecution and attack which soon got under way. And what an attack! The government found it necessary to close thousands of unions, suppress hundreds of labor periodicals, interfere with numberless trade union meetings, persecute and jail hundreds of thousands of workers!

The government was seeking nothing less than to destroy the conscience of the half-century old labor movement, and to pervert its moral fibre as a preliminary to the establishment of the New Order which Peron was planning. Peronismo never relaxed in this struggle, and overlooked no weapons which might be useful in bringing it success. Thus Argentines saw occurring before their unbelieving eyes things which never had happened before in their country's history: for instance, the sadistic torture of women telephone operators in Buenos Aires by the police, who were under the command of a general, and subject to the orders of a Minister of Interior who claimed to be a labor leader.

The First Government Intervention in the Unions

Decree #23852 confronted the unions with the choice of whether or not to become Peronista. Since many decided not to do so, the government, through the General Confederation of Labor (C.G.T.), "intervened" in them, throwing out their elected officials, and imposing agents to run them in the government's interest. Among those unions which suffered from this treatment during the first period were the Buenos Aires Municipal Workers Union, the Federation of Telephone Workers, the Bank Clerks Association, the Textile Workers Association, the Hospital Workers Association, the Maritime Labor Union, the Tobacco Workers Federation, the Domestic Servants Union, the Municipal Workers Union of Avellaneda, the Confederation of Municipal Workers, the Buenos Aires Printing Trades Workers Federation, the Metal Workers Union, and provincial and local organizations of the C.G.T. itself in Rosario, Mendoza, Comodoro Rivadavia, Córdoba and Tucumán. The C.G.T. even had the insolence to "intervene" in the Printing Trades Workers Union of Rosario, which did not even belong to the Confederation!

These interventions by the C.G.T. on orders of the government had no other object than to prepare the ground for these organizations to be taken over by the paid servants of Peronismo. They culminated in the expulsion of the most qualified leaders of the various unions, and the imposition of a reign of terror which made virtually impossible any activity which was opposed to the Peronistas. Not a few unions which yesterday were militant, proud and praiseworthy, are today only shells of their former selves, conserving little more than their names. Their destinies are now in the hands of opportunists, men who live off the bounty of the government, and who are willing tools for whatever adventure the dictatorship may demand of them.

Thus it is clear that at the same time Peron was destroying the free labor movement, he was building up this yellow trade unionism, whose representatives were fattening on the bounty of the State. This double process of destroying free trade unionism and buying up venal agents could have but one ending—the one which came to pass—that of reducing the free and slave trade unions to the relative proportions of the ant and the elephant, facing one another in unequal combat.

Closing of Unions

In many cases the government had to close unions completely when they would not do its wishes. The Peronistas thus shut down the Miscellaneous Workers Union of Mar del Plata, the Port Workers Union of Villa Constitución, the Bakers of San Martín and San Miguel, the Shipbuilders of Campana and San Fernando, the Bricklayers and Painters of San Fernando, the Brickmakers of Matanza, the Stevedores of Coronel Pringles, the Commercial Employees of Córdoba and many more, the list of which would be too long to enumerate.

Nor should the reader think that these unions which were closed had any rights to appeal the government's decision. More important than Justice or the Law was the omnipresent power of the dictatorship which decided by itself and for itself. The "reasons of State" which had brought about the closing of this or that union were as little subject to discussion as they were to revocation. These were irrevocable sentences. There was only one way in which these decisions could be revoked—if the workers would submit. If the workers would figuratively get upon their knees before the dictator, sing his praises, and swear their loyalty to him, the union could open once again. But it could only open under conditions which would make it a tool of general Peron.

Under these circumstances no free trade union could agree to open its doors again, since one of the essential conditions for a free labor movement is that it will never lose its dignity, will never agree to go down on its knees, will never surrender to tyrants nor lend itself to their designs. Many unions refused to surrender, and so the government kept them closed. They still remain so—a sure sign that the workers have not lost their dignity, nor lowered their banners.

On December 14, 1949 a Joint Committee of the National Congress intervened and closed the Workers Committee of Independent Trade Union Action (C.O.A.S.I.), the Workers Union of the Shoe Industry, and the Printing Trades Unity Group, which had their headquarters in the same building as the C.O.A.S.I. On May 9, 1951 armed bands of the C.G.T., with the complicity of the police and directed from the President's Palace, assaulted the headquarters of La Fraternidad (Railroad Brotherhood), the country's oldest national union, because it had decided not to support the reelection of General Peron. On November 20, 1951, armed bands of

the General Confederation of Labor and of the C.G.T.'s Shoe Workers' Union, took the former headquarters of C.O.A.S.I. by assault, seized the property of all three of the organizations which had their offices there.

The Right of Assembly

It is almost redundant after what we have already written, to say that the right of assembly does not exist in Argentina today, be it for political or trade union purposes. Even before the political parties were subjected to such treatment, the trade unions suffered from having to hold their meetings in the presence of both uniformed and plain clothes police, who in addition to intimidating those attending the meetings, exercised a strict control over the unions and of their most important members by systematic reports on their activities.

Trade unions suspected of not being sufficiently in favor of the regime, and even more so, unions which frankly were *not* sympathetic to it, lived constantly under police surveillance, until the moment of their final suppression. Each of the policemen assigned to the unions was "the eyes and ears" of that All Powerful Satrap in the President's Palace.

It was impossible for meetings watched over by policemen to pass resolutions hostile to the regime. But the police even reported when the unions failed to pass positive approbations of the regime, and when this occurred, it got increasingly hard for these unions to find meeting places. It was not long before they were even forbidden to hold meetings in their own headquarters.

This method of suffocating the normal life of free trade unions became even more visible when it concerned labor conventions which are always, because of their size and the quality of problems there dealt with, of immense importance in orienting and giving direction to the labor movement. In August 1948 more than 150 delegates to a congress of the F.O.G.R.A. (Hotel and Restaurant Workers Federation of Argentina), had to return to their homes without having been able to hold their convention because of police intervention. The real reason for this police action is seen from the fact that the F.O.G.R.A. had maintained its independence of the C.G.T., that is to say, had not bowed down to official labor policy.

There began in 1949 a process of prohibiting union meetings, always of the independent unions, such as the Workers' Union of the Shoe Industry,

the Textile Labor Union, the Union of White Collar Workers of Commerce and Industry, the Printing Trades Unity Group, etc. The Shipbuilders Federation has not been able for several years to hold its annual congresses. The Union Sindical Argentina (Argentine Trade Union) has protested various times against the police action in preventing freedom of assembly.

This process will end with the suppression of all of these unions . . . to prevent further protests. Finally, let us note that the C.O.A.S.I., which is the central labor organization of the Argentine free trade unions, and which has played a distinguished part in recent International Labor Congresses, was made illegal by a cumulative series of acts: first the prevention of its Second Congress, then the closing of its headquarters, then the imprisonment of its most active leaders.

Right to Strike Outlawed— As in Russia and Spain

In Peron's Argentina only those strikes are permitted which Peron wants. The Trade Union Organization Law has put the Argentine proletariat on a position of equality with those of Russia and Spain. That is to say, the Argentine, Spanish and Russian workers are equally unequal in the face of their employer-States, since all three are strictly forbidden to use the strike, on penalty of violent suppression in the most brutal manner.

It is unnecessary to say that to prohibit the right to strike is to set the labor movement back to where it was in its earliest days. There can be no real labor movement without the right to strike. The strike is the most primary and elemental—almost the instinctive—weapon of organized labor. In Argentina the right to strike is not discussed—quite simply, it does not exist. The outlawing of the right to strike, which is typical of all of the dictators, has provoked in the Argentina of Peron many cruel situations, and has produced more labor victims than did all the preceding "oligarchical" regimes, against which Peron protests so much.

For the Peron regime, strikes are "legal" or "illegal." The distinction does not arise from any analysis of the situation which has anything to do with the interests of the workers. No. It concerns itself only with the convenience of the regime. The government asks the question: "Is it convenient that they strike or isn't it?" From the answer to this question arises the decision whether the walkout is

legal or illegal. The justice of a strike makes no impression on the caprice of the dictatorship.

Many strikes have been broken by their being declared "illegal." Others, on the contrary, have continued in spite of the displays of force which the government has used to intimidate the strikers. We shall see later in this pamphlet to what extent the Peronista dictatorship has gone to break "illegal" strikes which it thinks are inconvenient for the government.

The only kinds of strikes which *can* be called in Argentina now without being labelled "illegal" by the government are fifteen minute walkouts called to show the workers' "concern for the health of the president's wife," or five minute demonstrations of support for the government for having successfully overcome some plot of "foreign capitalism" as the regime calls movements against it which are neither foreign nor capitalist.

Other times a walkout will be in obedience to a general call, in terms which leave no alternative, to listen to a speech by the Chief of State from the balcony of the President's Palace, much as the Italian workers used to be summoned to listen to Mussolini orate from the balcony of the Palazzo Venezia. Thus the only strikes which are permitted in present-day Argentina are not those in support of improvements of the conditions of the workers themselves, but only those called in homage to the powerful, to sing their praises, to applaud their speeches, to demonstrate to the point of hysteria against the victims of the hate of the regime.

Space limitations of this pamphlet do not permit many details, so the following list of strikes which were declared "illegal" by the government is by no means complete, even for the years which it covers. These walkouts included those of: private oil company workers (February 1948), Argentine Meat Co. (February 1948), Municipal Workers of San Martin (February 1948), milk distributors of Santa Fe (March 1948), spaghetti makers of Rosario (March 1948), construction workers of Rosario (March 1948), metal workers of Rosario (March 1948), port workers of Buenos Aires (April 1948), vegetable oil makers of Avellaneda (May 1948), cement workers and fishermen of Mar del Plata (June 1948), petroleum workers of Campana (September 1948), municipal workers of San Fernando (September 1948), cereal workers, vegetable oil pressers and cotton handlers (September 1948), elevator operators (September 1948), commercial employees of

the whole country (July 1948), printing trades workers (January 1949).

Treatment of walkouts of sugar workers, packing-house workers, railroaders, maritime workers, bank clerks, municipal workers of Buenos Aires and others also bear out this analysis. All of these strike calls were declared "illegal," leaving the workers no alternative but to submit or face the violence of the dictatorship.

Imprisonment and Torture

Everything from bribery to murder has been used by Peron to subvert the labor movement. And yet he has not succeeded—which is his basic problem. It is hard to say when he began to use violence. There is no fixed date, but it certainly did not come suddenly. The use of violence was for long in the calculations of the planners behind the Peron administration. The moment would come when verbal terror would not be sufficient, when it would be necessary to use physical force to eliminate the adversaries of the regime.

These people soon realized that it would take much time to achieve the result they desired if they confined themselves to intervening and closing unions, jailing or beating this or that worker, closing this or that meeting. An "act of surgery", as Mussolini had once expressed it, was needed. The "holy violence of the garrot," as it was called in the peninsula in Mussolini's time, was essential.

In September 1948 about 5,000 workers of the Municipal Packinghouse of the city of Buenos Aires went out on strike in protest against the jailing of several of their fellow workers who had been acting as shop stewards. Police violence (billies, tear gas and firearms) resulted in more than thirty workers being wounded. This incident seemed to indicate that the government had consciously launched on a policy of using violence against the trade unions, not just incidentally, but on a planned scale as a strategic operation against the whole labor movement.

The government's response to the printing trades strike of April 1949 was even more violent. One thousand workers were jailed in the Villa Devoto penitentiary for having declared a strike for a wage increase. This walkout, of course, did not have the support of the C.G.T., and the members of the union refused to make a "deal" whereby their demands would be granted in return for affiliation to the hated C.G.T.

In October 1949 the workers in the sugar mills

of Tucumán, Salta and Jujuy declared a strike after having exhausted all other means of obtaining a wage increase. After a considerable period of time during which the strikers were submitted to brutal treatment and incarceration by the police, the strike was broken by a reign of terror against the workers' organization. The cruelest episode of this struggle was the murder of the worker Carlos Antonio Aguirre, who died while being tortured by the police. His body was found sometime later on the roadside in a wooded area of the neighboring province of Santiago del Estero.

The C.G.T. condemned all expressions of indignation at this murder, and Peronista "justice" treated Aguirre's murders most indulgently. The actual assassin was given very light punishment, while all of his accomplices were freed entirely. This benevolent treatment of the murderers of Aguirre was a public invitation to use political assassination as a weapon against dissident Peronistas. No further proof is needed that Argentine justice is compromised, without autonomy, obedient to the slightest suggestions of the dictatorship.

In April 1949 another event occurred which indicated the climate in which the country had begun to live. Twenty-one telephone workers (10 women and 11 men) were arrested by the so-called "Special Section" of the police and four women and one man among them were tortured. The police were merely seeking to discover who had drawn up lists of demands which the telephone workers had submitted to their employer, but to achieve this they resorted to the use of the electric needle, which was applied without hesitation to four women, one of whom was well advanced in pregnancy. The stories which these telephone workers related are almost unbelievable. The treatment to which they were subjected was not only horrible, but violated the deepest human instincts. The cries of the victims were drowned out with records which the police played on an old victrola.

Frequently the arrest of trade union members has provoked a strike. One such case occurred in February 1949 when three packinghouse workers were held for a month without being allowed even the most rudimentary contact with their families before they were brought into the police station of Lujan, in the province of Buenos Aires. In another case, a construction worker, Manuel Iglesias, of Mar del Plata, was arrested and was shifted from police station to police station for a long time, so that it would

be difficult for his friends to find out where he was. He only appeared after his friends had concluded that he had become another victim of the Peronista dictatorship.

Unforgettable among the acts of violence of the Peron regime is the bloody suppression of the free labor movement of Salta. Four workers were killed in April 18, 1949, when the police opened fire on groups of workers who were protesting against the high cost of living.

1950 and 1951—The Period of the Great Strikes

The events of 1948 and 1949 presaged worse things to come for the labor movement. The years 1950 and 1951, marked as they were by a rapidly increasing cost of living, were characterized by great strike movements and consequent waves of repression. It is no coincidence that it was exactly in these years that the dictatorship approved the use of the repressive measures against the labor movement which we have discussed previously.

The port workers on the one hand, and the maritime workers on the other, presented the government with a grave problem: they refused to join the C.G.T., which they considered merely an organ of the government and not a free expression of organized labor. They joined in a protracted strike which paralyzed all activity in the Argentine ports, and seriously hampered the operation of the Argentine merchant marine. Port workers the world over refused to load and unload Argentine-flag ships.

The strike was finally broken, due largely to the lack of economic resources of the strikers. The walk-out brought to full view the regime's system of oppression. There were more prisoners, more spying, more persecution, more police actions. As always, the paid press, as it had done with the case of the sugar workers, claimed that the port and maritime strike movement was directed from abroad, and was in the service of foreign "interests." This is the traditional smokescreen of the dictators, who claim that all opposition to them comes from abroad, where, apparently, they think only they can go, to beg on their knees for dollars.

New and more serious strikes were still to come. In November and December 1950 the railroad workers engaged in two large walkouts for improvements in wages. The government reacted strongly against these strikes, putting hundreds of workers in jail and closing numerous union headquarters. The work-

ers returned to their jobs in both cases after promises had been made to them that their demands would be granted. Failure to fulfill these promises, and interference with the right of the workers to hold meetings, led to yet another railroad walkout which began on January 24, 1951. Thousands of workers were jailed as a result, and other thousands were fired from their jobs on the government-owned railroads. However, Peron had to resort to mobilization of the strikers into the army to get the railroads moving once again.

Having broken its promises to the workers, closed their trade union headquarters, and fired thousands of workers, the government took yet another step against the railroaders on May 9, 1951. The headquarters of "La Fraternidad", the union of locomotive engineers and firemen, was seized by force. La Fraternidad, in conformity with its statutes, which prohibit political partisanship by the union, had resisted attempts by the C.G.T. and other government agencies to force it to endorse the reelection of General Peron as president. On May 9 the union suffered from its boldness when its headquarters were seized by a Peronista mob some 300 strong, armed and with police protection. The next day members of this mob proceeded to "depose" the officials of La Fraternidad and to pledge the support of the union to their master.

Nevertheless, the railroad workers remained restless and resentful. The problems of the year before had still not been resolved. And the situation had now been made worse by the continued imprisonment of strikers, by the firing of many other workers and by the closing of union headquarters. The assault on La Fraternidad instead of improving the situation, made it even more serious. Petitions couched in cautious language and conciliatory gestures by the railroaders to settle their grievances brought no results.

So on August 1, 1951 there began the fourth railroad walkout within nine months. As a result, new waves of workers were clapped into jail, many thousands more were fired, dozens of union leaders went into exile to escape torture at the hands of the Peronista police. With his control of the army and the police force, Peron was able to break the strike, but only at the cost of making crystal clear the rising tide of unpopularity in which the regime was being engulfed.

That is the situation at the present time. Although a number of railroad workers have been fired as a tactical maneuver by the government, many more

remain in prison, in hiding or in exile. The cruelties which they have suffered would in themselves fill a book. Dozens of workers were tortured, almost to death, while members of their families, their friends and their lawyers suffered persecutions and punishments for the mere fact of having been associated with these unfortunate workers.

This in grand outline is the martyrdom of the Argentine labor movement.

Chapter III

The Police State—The Real Constitution of Peron's Argentina

THE martyrdom through which the Argentine labor movement has passed has shown the extent to which Peron has had to go in order to make the labor movement subservient to his government. According to Peron the trade union should be an organ of the State. There should be no strikes which are not authorized by the State. The country's central labor organization must always be ready to run to the defense of the government when the regime is in danger of a popular revolt against dictatorship.

Peron today, like Hitler yesterday, employs pseudo-labor language in order to confuse the workers of the continent. Peron, like all of the modern tyrants has made use of the political and social vocabulary of progressive movements and has twisted them to his use in establishing oppression and despotism. Peron today, like Hitler yesterday, talks about imperialism, plutocracy, oligarchy, the working class, the class struggle, social justice. But these verbal pyrotechnics have no other object than to tie the workers to the dictatorship.

One who understands what Peron has done to the workers' trade unions, as described in the previous chapter, is better able to comprehend the totalitarian and pictorial nature of the regime installed by Peron. No one in command of the facts can be misled by his high sounding phrases and his lying "declarations of the rights of the workers", knowing full well that Argentine Republic is dominated by a police state.

The vast and complex police organization maintains a rigid control over all public activities, and keeps a close check, too, on the lives and habits of the individual workers and the citizens in general. During the last few years the Peronista police regime has detained between 30,000 and 50,000 workers, teachers, students, journalists, members of the armed

forces and rank and file citizens. No one can enter or leave the country without first passing through the most rigid police surveillance. Many anti-Peronista Argentines cannot leave the country, over which the police have dropped a miniature iron curtain.

Hundreds of workers are exiled in neighboring countries, principally in Uruguay, and Peron, to punish them even while they are abroad, prevents their families from leaving Argentina to join them. The army's spy service exercises a rigid control over the mails, and frequently the official press publishes private correspondence of members of the Opposition which have been purloined from the post office. Periodicals and newspapers considered dangerous by the Peron police are not allowed to enter the country.

Peron has destroyed Argentine journalists and has closed all opposition periodicals, of whatever political color. The totalitarian regime has seized control of the labor movement, and has assumed complete direction of the country's radio stations.

Another characteristic feature of the totalitarian regime of Peron is that the State has been converted into an organ of propaganda. At the same time the Peronistas are suppressing the right of the workers and citizens in general to express themselves, they have increased without restraint the propaganda of the State, by the State and for the State. To give cohesion to his brutal dictatorship Peron, following the Italian, German and Russian examples, has propounded a doctrine of worship of the State.

Peron has maintained and carried out "the leadership principle", claiming that the control of the country must remain in the hands of a single strong and undivided clique. This "single command" has resulted in the creation of bureaus which ladle forth the ideas, via "memoranda" which the representatives and servants of the regime are to repeat at national and international conferences.

Peronista totalitarianism has established rigid economic control over the Argentine nation as one more weapon to assure that all will have to serve the regime. It has used the funds of the government to enrich those closely associated with the administration, thus creating in a few short years a new wealthy class, the "shirtless millionaires", such as Jose Espejo, secretary general of the C.G.T., Isaias Santin, his deputy, and other "labor leaders" who have piled up vast wealth while the working people suffer the pangs of hunger.

There is thus no doubt that this Southern Imperialism, which still dreams of reconstituting the old

Spanish viceroyalty of the Rio de la Plata by the conquest of Uruguay, Paraguay, Bolivia and southern Brazil, constitutes a totalitarian regime, the essential basis of which is the police State. The texts of some of the penal laws proposed by Peron and put on the statute books by his puppet Congress leave no doubt about this.

The Regime's Penal Laws

Those Argentine free trade unionists, teachers, students and democratic political leaders now in exile have denounced numerous times, in the international press and at meetings and conferences, the police state legislation of the Peron regime. We will merely note some of its most characteristic features so as to give a clear idea of the nature of the dictatorship which now controls Argentina.

On August 28, 1945 the repressive decree aimed at "Crimes Against the Security of the State" was issued. It is still in effect and has been made worse by other drastic legislation which we will discuss later. Article 32 of this decree provides two to three years' imprisonment "for any act not provided for in the Penal Code which has as its purpose the impeding or diminishing of industrial production". This quite obviously is aimed at the right to strike, which was not punishable under the old Penal Code of Argentine democracy.

Article 33 of the decree provides from two months to three years incarceration for anyone "who ceases or suspends work for any reason not directly connected with the job, of tendentiously creates economic, social or political problems to interfere with production". The vagueness of this provision which allows the government to jail workers for "tendentiously" creating problems is such as to be virtually all-inclusive.

As if these provisions were not enough, Article 34 provides six months to three years imprisonment for anyone who "shall in any way promote the calling of a strike of workers employed by the Federal, provincial, or municipal governments, or those employed by semi-official enterprises or public utilities." Article 35 then goes on to provide a month to two years in jail for anyone "who in any way aids the continuation of a strike of workers in private enterprises, if such a strike has been declared illegal by competent authorities."

Article 50 of this same decree provides two months to two years in jail for "anyone who prints, reproduces, distributes or saves any piece of propaganda"

concerning the matters covered by this decree. Thus, all those who contribute directly or indirectly to the development of the labor movement are subject to penalty.

Article 80 condemns to six months to three years incarceration anyone "who in any way sends abroad tendentious or false information destined to perturb the public order, economy or security of the country." Although each of these provisions is worth considerable discussion, for reasons of space we shall pass on to a consideration of other decrees.

The so-called National Defense Law was presented to Congress without warning by Peron and was passed with virtually no debate late in August, 1948. This law gives the government extraordinary powers in time of war. However, the truly Prussian and totalitarian thing about this law is its definition of "time of war." This phrase is stretched to include: a) actual war; b) imminent danger of war, as decided by the President, the Council of War or any other competent military authority; c) grave catastrophes which affect important sections of the country; d) grave emergencies.

The vagueness of the expressions employed, particularly of "grave emergencies", the interpretation of which is left solely up to the president, is the danger of this law, since it allows the application in times of peace of the military code which should be valid only in case of war. To prove that our interpretation of this law is not merely inspired by opposition to Peron, we need only cite the fact that the government has maintained since September 28, 1951 that the country is in a "state of internal war." In virtue of this "state" the government has jailed no less than 2000 workers and other citizens without their being brought before a court, or without any statement being given as to why they were arrested.

Repeated decisions of the Supreme Court have stated that during this "state of war", all guarantees of security of the individual are suspended, and the courts have no control over the persons arrested under orders of the President of the Republic. As a result of this monstrous verdict, thousands of citizens have been arrested and are being held on the sole authorization of the President. It is necessary for every worker of the hemisphere to put himself in the position of the workers of Argentina, who live in constant fear that they or their friends may be jailed under this law, in order to understand to what depths Argentina, once the standard bearer of democracy in the continent, has fallen.

We will mention yet another law which has been dictated by Peron, who is so anxious to raise a smoke-screen of pseudo-legality to conceal his tyrannous acts—a "legality" which has no relation to what progressive men have always called the Law, which is intimately connected with the recognition of liberty, and which has as its chief objective the strengthening and promoting of liberty. This measure is a reactionary reform of that part of the Penal Code concerned with "disrespect" towards public officials, which was passed in September, 1949. This reform serves to extend so greatly the concept of "disrespect" as to cover anything which might in the least offend the susceptibilities of the Argentine dictator.

The text of the new article 244 of the Penal Code as reformed, reads: "A sentence of from two months to a year in prison shall be imposed on anyone who issues a challenge to a duel, or who menaces, injures or in any other way offends the dignity or decorum of any public functionary, as a result of the official's exercise of his duties, or in the course of the exercise of his duties, regardless of whether this act be directed against the official himself, or against the power he represents or the public organism of which he is a part, or whether it be executed in some indirect manner."

A further section provides that "If the aggrieved party be the president or vice president of the Nation, a national or provincial legislator, a governor or a judge, the penalty shall be from six months to three years imprisonment." It then adds, "The truth of the facts alleged against the aggrieved official shall be no defense against punishment under this law." In other words, all that is necessary for a judge to apply the sentence provided for, is that an official claim that he has been insulted. The official need offer no proof whatsoever.

This revision of the Penal Code includes not only spoken but printed "insults" as well. It thus negates freedom of speech, a freedom without which other liberties are more apparent than real. Article 244 of the new Penal Code has this to say about journalists: "When the printing press is used to commit disrespect, the editor of the journal in which this crime is committed shall be responsible, unless this editor shall indicate, within three days after the date of the preliminary investigation, who is the author of the article, and the author shall present himself within five days and admit his culpability."

What does this law mean? To understand, one need only to ask himself if there are enough jails

in the United States to hold all the journalists who criticize President Truman, or if there are enough jails in Latin America to hold those who carry on the struggle against bad government and corrupt officials.

Still another piece of legislation was the Law for the Repression of Espionage, Sabotage and Treason, promulgated on October 11, 1950. This law is only one additional link in the chain of repression which binds the people of Argentina. For instance, Article 8 of the law says: "Anyone who provokes public alarm or depresses the public spirit, causing damage to the Nation shall be punished with a prison term of from one to eight years." Comment on such a measure is superfluous.

Article No. 6 of this brutally reactionary piece of legislation provides: "A sentence of from one month to four years shall be imposed on anyone who without authorization gives, communicates, publishes or otherwise diffuses economic, political, military financial or industrial data which, though not secret or restricted, is not intended for publication and was obtained by the individual as a result of his employment, function, status or mission."

Afraid that the previously cited prohibitions against strikes were not sufficient, the Peronista penologists have written in Article 7 of this law another provision sufficiently vague as to cover any case against the workers. It says, "Anyone who disorganizes, destroys, deteriorates, puts out of use, in part or completely, temporarily or permanently, any documents, objects, materials, installations, services or industries of whatever kind, for the purpose of perturbing, retarding or impeding military, economic, financial, social, scientific or industrial development of the Nation shall be punished with a prison term of from one to twenty-five years." Obviously any strike whatsoever could be included in this broad definition of sabotage.

Article 14 of this same law provides exemption from punishment for anyone who has been involved in any of the acts listed in it, but who denounces these acts to the civil and military authorities before having carried them out. It reads: "Anyone who before the commission of such a crime denounces it to the civilian or military authorities and procures the arrest of its co-authors or accomplices can be exempted from punishment."

Finally, in September 1951 the Congress passed a new Penal Code which had the strange characteristic of not sifting existing legislation and throwing out whatever seemed to be no longer pertinent, but

of merely adding new crimes, setting forth vague and incoherent provisions, and conserving for use in case the new law should not be sufficiently broad to trap the country's citizens and workers, all the dispositions of previous laws.

Among the really monstrous provisions of this new Penal Code is Section 4 of Article 1 which applies penal sanctions to any resident abroad who attacks the credit, property or economy of the Nation. This article implies a type of penal imperialism without precedent in any country in the world.

Article 7 establishes a most reactionary legal concept. It provides that when Argentina refuses to concede the extradition of one who has been condemned by a foreign tribunal, the individual involved will be punished instead in an Argentine prison, being given a sentence for the crime which "is by nature most comparable" to that for which he has been convicted abroad.

Article 9 provides for punishment under emergency laws, and applications of this punishment even beyond the period when the law is valid. Article 49 provides that when a crime is committed via the press, the editor, publisher, printer and manager of the periodical involved shall be punished, if it is not possible to determine the author, or if it is impossible to administer punishment to the author.

Another menace against the freedom of the press is the provision of Article 340 of the new Penal Code which establishes a fine of from 100 to 10,000 pesos for the publication of any document which is not exclusively intended for commercial or industrial purposes, which omits the name of the publisher, printer and the place where the document was printed.

Incorporated in the new Penal Code are all previous provisions of law which punish the holding of meetings for the planning, preparing, calling and aiding of strikes.

We have only indicated a few examples of the vast penal legislation of the Peron regime, but they have served to indicate with documentary proof the profoundly reactionary and police-state nature of the Argentine totalitarianism.

Chapter IV

The Worker's Standard of Living Under Peronista Totalitarianism

IN Chapter One we pointed out the political nature of the Peronista infiltration in Latin America. In the second chapter we told of the martyrdom of the

free workers of Argentina. In the next section we documented the totalitarian nature of the Peronista regime. Now we wish to lay aside for a moment the discussion of the Peronista destruction of fundamental human rights, and turn to the study of what has happened to the standard of living of the average Argentine worker under this regime. We shall show with equal documentation the terrible situation in which the Argentine workers find themselves as a result of the incapacity of the government of that country.

The accomplishments of a regime can be largely measured by the effect which it has on the standard of living of the producing masses. Let a ruler say what he wish, let him offer the most glittering words and promises and carry out as pyrotechnical a propaganda campaign as he desires, the facts of the case will in the end be shown by three things: 1) whether the economic organization of the country has been maintained at a grade of efficiency which permits regular social improvement, or whether it has been allowed to deteriorate and fall behind technically due to the incapacity of the leadership; 2) Whether the economic organization of the country in addition to being efficient indicates material progress which permits a slow unbroken improvement in living conditions; 3) Whether the standard of living of the workers has been increased, remained stationary, or decreased during the period under discussion.

That is to say, that in order to judge a strong-arm government such as that controlled by Peron and his consort it is not sufficient to take their misleading claims, or even merely to answer them. It is indispensable to get the answers to these three basic questions before one can reach a valid conclusion.

Peron had all of the means in his hands, from the absolute legal authority (as he himself has recently recognized) to the untold riches of the Argentine Republic, including credits accumulated during the war, and extraordinary harvests at a time when the world need for Argentine products was greatest. Peron began his rule with an Argentina which was exceptionally rich, marvelously endowed with natural resources; and he possessed the dictatorial powers which made it impossible for anyone to interfere with whatever programs he might have wished to carry out.

He and his friends commenced their rule in 1943. It is legitimate to ask what has been the result of this nine years of control of the nation's destinies. In answer to the first question, it is sufficient to say that Argentina has fallen far behind on the road to tech-

nical progress, both in its industries and in its public services. So true is this that Argentina now is faced with the problems of insufficient production, of deficient quality and high cost.

Argentina has insufficient agricultural implements; which, added to the basic fact of a decrease in the amount of land under cultivation, explains the constant and alarming decline in the agricultural production of the country, which, regardless of what government has been in power, has hitherto been known as the world's granary. Argentina lacks tractors, seeders, plows, harvesters. Transportation facilities are completely run down due to lack of proper maintenance. The railroad system in particular is a quarter of a century behind times and its locomotives and other rolling stock have been used far beyond the point of safety.

The Argentina of Peron has not only destroyed its once efficient railroad and urban transport system, but has also destroyed its electric power system. In the city of Buenos Aires they have just prohibited the use of electric irons and other appliances. It is forbidden to install new workshops or factories which require the use of electric power, because the power plants are not in a position to provide the extra current. Many towns of the Republic have "brownouts" several nights of the week, and even in Buenos Aires the electric light situation leaves a great deal to be desired. The windows of the shops of the beautiful city of Buenos Aires, even those of the luxurious Florida section, are being lit by kerosene lamps. In a word, the Peron regime has destroyed the nation's capital resources and has profoundly disorganized its public utilities.

In response to the second question, we can say that the economic organization of Argentina has ceased to be progressive as a result of its technical backwardness, and its policy of economic nationalism and isolation which has been carried to really absurd limits. The result for the workers is that as the economic situation of the Nation has declined, it has become harder and harder for them to maintain an adequate standard of living.

Now for the answer to the third question—that directly concerning the standard of living of the workers. If this pamphlet had been written in the middle of 1951 it would have been necessary to bring together various pieces of evidence published by the Peron government and collected by the Argentine Resistance. We should have had to present compara-

tive prices of the principal articles of consumption since 1943.

Now, in July 1952, however, we do not need to appeal to this kind of exhaustive presentation of evidence, since the C.G.T. and Juan Domingo Peron himself have confessed publicly the terrible situation to which the government has brought the workers. On the next to the last day of last year—December 30, 1951—President Peron confessed that the equilibrium between prices and wages had not been maintained, that the former had risen and the latter had remained stationary.

How sad a confession! Until that very moment Peron had been telling the world that capitalism no longer existed in Argentina, that a new economic order had been created, called Social Justice, and that capitalism had disappeared. Now he had to admit that not only had capitalism continued to exist, but since 1949 the equilibrium between prices and wages had been broken, that while prices had gone up 80% since that date, wages had lagged far behind.

In other words, the Peronista "Social Justice" regime has demonstrated once again a lesson which all workers who have fought on the picket line know, that while prices tend to go up by the elevator, wages have to laboriously climb the stairs. As a result the C.G.T. asked that the equilibrium between prices and wages be reestablished, and said this would necessitate a wage increase of 46%. It asked the government to see to it that new mixed wage commissions grant such wage boosts.

The confessions of December 1951 and January 1952 add up then to the statement that in the Argentine totalitarian paradise, prices have risen 80% in two years and that to keep up with this increase, wages will have to increase 46%. And this wage rise will only keep up with the increase in prices, not surpass it.

Another disconcerting admission by the Peron government was the announcement in February 1952 that in order to have enough meat to honor the country's commitments to Great Britain, and to conserve the nation's herds, it would be necessary for Argentine consumers to go without meat two days a week. The Argentine workers and consumers must abstain from eating meat so that the British can have their meat ration. To such a state has come the policy of absolute sovereignty and economic nationalism of Señor Peron! The worst form of loss of sovereignty and of serving foreign interests is to oblige one's own people to eat less for the benefit of con-

sumers in other countries. Argentina has needed the whole immense talent of Peron to come for the first time in the country's history to the point where its people lack meat!

Peron's confessions were repeated in a speech by him on February 18 of this year, in which he said that in order to save Argentina it is necessary to increase production, decrease consumption and stimulate savings. Peron does not understand by "savings" the putting aside of the superfluous, but rather not consuming the necessary. His speech said specifically that the people should only eat what is "absolutely essential," should spend less, should not waste food, should not buy "excessive" amounts of clothing, should keep track of unscrupulous merchants who might try to rob them. He said that the people should avoid buying on time, and that they should not go to the races, the cabarets and the gambling houses.

In the same speech Peron said that he was ending the subsidies which the government had been paying to merchants and manufacturers so that they could continue to sell at low prices. Finally, he said that everyone in the Argentine family should work—the father, mother and the children, even those of very tender age.

With such confessions, taken from the official publications of the Argentine government, we do not need to add any statistical data concerning the standard of living of the workers. However, we will merely point out that the housing situation of the Argentine workers has grown considerably worse during recent years. In 1947 the government statistics indicated that there was a deficit of approximately 600,000 housing units, which, calculating five persons to a family, meant that three million human beings were affected—almost twenty percent of the nation's sixteen million people. In the last four years the situation has deteriorated notably, as Peron was forced to admit recently when he decreed the suppression of any further "unnecessary" construction so that the materials could be made available for the building of family dwellings.

The economic situation of the Argentine workers is very grave. Even supposing that Peron can adopt means to equilibrate wages and prices once again, the problem is not solved, since Argentine industrial and agricultural production has declined. The value of the peso has fallen to only one eighth of its former worth, and there are no technical resources available for the improvement of the economic situation.

Peron cannot overcome the situation of fundamental economic disequilibrium which is the cause of the decline in the standard of living of the Argentine workers.

Chapter V

The International Labor Movement Condemns Peronismo

THE workers of the American hemisphere should know that the world-wide free labor movement has been concerned with the martyrdom of the Argentine workers ever since the advent of Peron. We shall give a brief resume of some of the resolutions which have been passed against the Peron regime in meetings of the International Labor Organization (I.L.O.), and in congresses of the world free labor movement. These resolutions have been based on documented protests which the free workers of Argentina have presented to the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations and to the International Labor Office.

As early as 1945 in the Conference of the I.L.O. held in Paris, the credentials of the Peronista trade union delegates were not accepted, after the conference had heard the report of Francisco Perez Leiros and Julio Falasco, representatives of the Argentine free trade union movement, who challenged the credentials of the Peronista C.G.T. The C.O.A.S.I. protested the C.G.T. credentials in the 1946, 1947, and 1948 I.L.O. conferences.

When the founding congress of the Inter-American Confederation of Workers (C.I.T.) was held in Lima, Peru in January 1948, the C.G.T. was barred from admission, as a mere tool of the Peron government, and both the C.G.T. and the Peron government were denounced for their abuses of the free trade union movement. After the C.G.T. had failed in its attempt to gain admission to the Lima congress, the Peron government denied a passport to Alfredo Fidanza, delegate of the Argentine C.O.A.S.I., who was unable to get to the congress. When they heard of this move, the delegates in the Lima meeting resolved to send their sympathy and support to the free workers of Argentina and to denounce the anti-democratic and anti-labor actions of the Peron regime.

The C.O.A.S.I. of Argentina again challenged the delegation which Peron had sent to the I.L.O. Conference in Geneva in April 1949 and a similar protest was presented to the preliminary meeting of

free trade unions held in Geneva soon afterwards to pave the way for the formation of a new international free labor confederation. The C.O.A.S.I. representative in both cases was Jacinto Oddone, who later was sentenced to one year in jail by the Peron regime, on trumped up charges, but actually was imprisoned because of his actions on behalf of the C.O.A.S.I. in Geneva.

The Second Congress of the Inter-American Confederation of Workers in Havana in September 1949 unanimously protested against and condemned the lack of trade union freedom and the totalitarian State intervention in labor affairs in Argentina. The delegates of the C.O.A.S.I. to this conference was Alfredo Leon Ferreira, who was sentenced to six months in jail upon his return to Argentina.

Of particular importance is the resolution adopted at the founding congress of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions held in London in November and December 1949. Delegate Candido Gregorio, who represented the C.O.A.S.I. at this London meeting, and since his return to America has been forced to live in exile in Montevideo, presented the case of the workers against the dictatorship of Peron. The labor attaché in the Argentine Embassy in London challenged the credentials of Candido Gregorio, but the Congress by acclamation approved his credentials and went on to adopt a resolution against all totalitarian regimes which were preventing the free function of organized labor.

A few days after this resolution was adopted, Candido Gregorio received news from Argentina that the dictator had ordered his dismissal from his job with a private firm in Buenos Aires. The London Congress adopted a resolution of solidarity and pledged its moral and economic support to the Argentine delegate, at the same time protesting the attitude of the dictator. Later, by resolution of the Congress, the organizations there represented presented an official protest to the Argentine government.

In 1950 there occurred in Argentina a formidable maritime strike which lasted three months and was led by Captain Mason. The International Transport Workers Federation expressed its complete solidarity with the Argentine maritime workers, giving moral and economic support to the strikers, and applying a boycott to all Argentine ships then being operated by strikebreakers.

In January 1951 the founding congress of the Inter-American Regional Organization of the Interna-

tional Confederation of Free Trade Unions (known by its Spanish initials, as the O.R.I.T.) was held in Mexico City, with representation from workingclass groups from all over the hemisphere. On the basis of a fake invitation, delegates from the Argentine C.G.T. appeared at the Congress. However, by almost unanimous decision of the delegates, their presence there was repudiated and they were forced to leave the meeting. The Congress at the same time went on record as denouncing the dictatorship of General Peron and its treatment of the labor movement of Argentina.

In the meeting of the Economic and Social Council held in Santiago, Chile in April 1951, as a result of a denunciation made by the C.O.A.S.I., the case of Argentine suppression of a trade union liberty was put on the agenda.

Candido Gregorio, as observer delegate, attended the I.L.O. Conference in Geneva in June 1951. In this meeting the workers' group at the conference discussed the problem of trade union liberty, passing an energetic resolution against the governments of Venezuela and Argentina, and agreed to present official complaints against both countries to the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations.

In June 1951 the Second Congress of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions was held in Milan, and it approved a declaration against totalitarianism in which the Peron government was specifically mentioned. This was passed unanimously by the delegates who represented sixty million workers from all over the world.

In the May 1952 meeting of the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations, Miss Toni Sender of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, presented documented charges made by the C.O.A.S.I. and asked full consideration of the problem of suppression of trade union freedom in Argentina. The matter was referred for action to the International Labor Organization.

Such, in brief, has been the reaction of the free workers of the world against the dictatorship of Peron and in solidarity with the workers of Argentina.

Chapter VI

The Workers Are the Vanguard of Social Progress in America

SO FAR we have accomplished two of the ends which we sought to obtain by the publication of this pamphlet: 1) to denounce the so-called Workers

Conference of Asuncion as the tool of the political program of the imperialism of the South; and 2) to document the labor and trade union situation in Peron's Argentina, so as to refute the mouthings of the well-paid propagandists whom Peron has scattered throughout the hemisphere. Now, at the end of this work we wish to call the workers of the continent to the struggle against the dictatorships of our hemisphere, as an indispensable condition for the social progress of our America.

The workers of this part of the world, which is not in vain called the New World, should be conscious of the fact that they hold in their hands the social and political progress of our hemisphere. In their struggles against economic privilege in their respective countries, the workers are defending the Rights of Man and that liberty which gives dignity to the individual. This liberty, in turn, is indispensable in our struggle to raise the standards of living of the suffering workingclass of America.

In America there is hunger, malnutrition and illiteracy. A large part of the Latin American population, which numbers 150,000,000 souls, still lacks a strong labor movement to help in the struggle to raise the material, intellectual and moral standards of living. Whereas the number of calories needed for the healthy existence of a normal individual is approximately 3,000 a day, a large proportion of the workers of Latin America have less than 2,000 calories daily. And although in the United States and Canada each inhabitant has approximately 90 grams of protein a day, of which 60 grams are of animal origin, in the greater part of South America—excepting Argentina and Uruguay, which are great meat producing countries—the workers have less than 40 grams of protein a day, of which only some 20 grams are of animal origin.

The annual income of the average Latin American is less than one tenth the annual income of residents of the most advanced countries of the world. While illiteracy has all but vanished in the most advanced countries, in Latin America it is one of the gravest and most urgent of problems. Some 80% of the population remains illiterate. The powers-that-be in Latin America have been as little concerned with the cultural advancement of the workers of the region as they have with giving them enough to eat.

Recent publications of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (I.C.F.T.U.), basing their analysis on materials published by the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations,

have indicated that three fourths of the workers of South America do not have enough to eat. Employers in the area do little to provide an adequate diet for their workers, though they deny their workers nothing when it comes to alcohol or drugs. The I.C.F.T.U. publication states that on most plantations in Colombia, Peru, and Bolivia, employers give their workers, in addition to their wages, a certain amount of coca (the plant from which cocaine is made), which the workers chew to overcome the pangs of hunger and exertion from overwork, but which has a gravely detrimental effect upon their health. In many sugar plantations the employers provide their workers with great quantities of rum.

In Latin America there exist the most brutal social contrasts. On the one hand the area is the food basket of the West, producing 86% of the coffee, 70% of the bananas, 40% of the sugar cane, etc., and on the other hand, great sections of the working population live in the most excruciating poverty. What the I.C.F.T.U. study says is true, that in many parts of America the workers have only the most miserable of housing, shacks of mud and sticks. It is equally true that in many parts of the continent less than 5% of the babies drink milk regularly.

In the Latin American countries there is extensive social legislation on the books. However, in a majority of cases this is "for export" only, meant to impress the foreign observer but not to be applied in fact. While the governments send delegates to international conferences to give the impression that they are supporting the most advanced principles of social progress, the fact is that in numberless plantations, haciendas and ranches using the most primitive methods of exploiting the soil, the employers exercise a despotism many times more cruel than the obvious despotism of the military dictators, because it is carried on without witnesses, without publicity. All of this has been pointed out by the I.C.F.T.U.

The organized workers in the I.C.F.T.U. and the O.R.I.T. have consciously taken up the banner of social progress in this hemisphere. In this gigantic task, they have run into the blind and almost feudal resistance of the great trusts and the great agricultural proprietors who pull the strings which animate many South American governments. The I.C.F.T.U. points out in its studies that the aristocracies and oligarchies of the world are leaning on military dictatorships in the hope that these will crush in a pool of blood the attempt of the workers to achieve the liberation of the peoples of the tropi-

cal countries. International fifth columnists such as the Peronistas aid these military dictatorships and the imperialism of the South.

We do not have to say again that the free labor movement is in the vanguard of the struggle for the social and economic liberation of the workers and the nations of the hemisphere. The founding congress of the I.C.F.T.U. in London made this abundantly clear. It proclaimed that economic democracy and political democracy are inseparable, adding that the world must free itself of the tyrannies of Communism, Fascism and Falangism and all other forms of political totalitarianism as well as from the domination and exploitation of the trusts and monopolies. This manifesto which called upon the workers of all countries, races, and creeds to unite in a powerful free and democratic trade union movement, proclaimed that the free trade unions of the world would support the struggle of all peoples suffering from police state regimes, and military dictatorships such as those of Latin America.

There is no danger, then, that the phoney labor organization established at Asuncion as the tool of the military dictatorships, can rob us, the free workers, of our program of constant struggle for the redemption of humanity. They can repeat some of our phrases to serve as a mask for their maneuvers. However, the banner of real social justice will remain with us, the free workers, who in the continent of Washington, Bolivar and San Martin, fight for the fulfillment of the great economic, social and political reforms which will transform the status of labor in our countries.

Workers of America: Let us unite for a free and democratic labor movement! For free, honest and powerful trade unions! For the fight against economic oppression and the totalitarian dictatorships of our hemisphere and the world!

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